

PREFACE

STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF GOLDEN EAGLES

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The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is a cosmopolitan species occurring on every continent of the Northern Hemisphere and locally in northern Africa (Palmer 1988, Kochert et al. 2002). It is found widely across Europe and Asia where its current numbers are largely unknown but, in most countries, it is considered to have declined. In the British Isles, for instance, its numbers have been greatly reduced (Watson 1997) and, in Japan, it is rare and listed as an Endangered Species (M. Abe pers. comm.). In North America, the Golden Eagle historically inhabited much of the continent. Today, it has essentially been eliminated from most eastern states but populations throughout Canada and the western U.S. are considered to be abundant and stable. In Mexico, very little information exists on the species' status. The Golden Eagle is officially listed as Threatened or Endangered in most countries included within its range and its status in many other countries is uncertain (Kochert et al. 2002).

There have been several documented threats to Golden Eagle populations. Shooting has been a serious threat throughout the range of the species, especially where it has come into contact with livestock (Palmer 1988). Poisoning, both intentional and unintentional, has also been a problem. Intentional poisonings have resulted from efforts to control predators in areas where eagles have been suspected of depredating livestock (Watson 1997). Unintentional poisonings have been associated with environmental contaminants such as lead and organochlorine contaminants. More recently, afforestation and human disturbances in nesting ar-

reas have been cited as threats to Golden Eagles (Watson 1997).

Because of the need for more information on the current status of the Golden Eagle and threats that jeopardize its future survival, a symposium was organized as part of the 1999 annual meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation held in La Paz, Mexico. Its purpose was to bring together currently-active researchers from all regions of the Golden Eagle's distribution to give first-hand information on the distribution and status of the Golden Eagle in their region. Together, these papers represent a synthesis of the current state of knowledge and conservation status of Golden Eagles in several locations around the world. They give information on distribution, breeding behavior, habitat requirements, prey needs, and sensitivity to habitat modification, which can be used to direct future research on the conservation of this species.

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